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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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8/26/61

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: July 14, 1961

SUBJECT: Conversation with Minister Strauss

PARTICIPANTS: The Secretary of State
Franz Josef Strauss, Minister of Defense of the Federal
Republic of Germany
Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense
Roswell L. Gilpatric, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Paul Nitze, Assistant Secretary of Defense
GENERAL SOURCE General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
General Maxwell Taylor, Military Adviser to the President
Henry A. Kissinger, Special White House Consultant
Dean Acheson, former Secretary of State
U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary of State
William R. Tyler, Acting Assistant Secretary of State
Wilhelm G. Grewe, Ambassador of the Fed. Rep. of Germany

The main theme of discussion at the dinner was the thinking and policy of the Federal Republic of Germany with regard to Berlin and the extent to which the German Government is prepared to go in support of the U.S.

Mr. Acheson asked Minister Strauss to give his views, which he did at some considerable length, and in line with the thoughts he had already expressed in previous meetings in Washington that day (see memcon of discussion at State Department of same date).

The most extensive and intensive part of the conversation related to a question whether the Federal Republic was prepared in the last resort to go all the way in support of the U.S. in the event that the Berlin crisis were to deteriorate to the point where decisions had to be made by the U.S. to take measures which might lead to armed conflict with the GDR and Soviet forces. Minister Strauss was asked flatly whether, in such an event, the U.S. could count on the unqualified and total support of the Federal Republic. On this specific point, Minister Strauss avoided giving an equally clear-cut reply. He stressed again and again that the Federal Republic felt that it was entitled to full participation in Western planning, particularly with regard to military aspects. He said that such participation was long overdue, and he brushed aside the argument that such planning hitherto had been on a working basis only, and that it was first necessary for us to reach our

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reach our own position before bringing the Germans in. He said several times that the question of whether Germany would give the U.S. full support was "no issue," but he specifically said that he was not in a position to answer the question put to him with an unqualified yes. He related at all times, both explicitly and implicitly, German support and commitment to go down the line with us to full prior consultation with the Government of the Federal Republic. However, he expressed his personal belief that in the end the Federal Republic would be at our side when the time came for taking whatever steps we felt were necessary, including those which might lead to armed conflict.

He stressed his personal feeling that there is a wide discrepancy between the professions of firmness and resolution to defend Berlin which have been given on repeated occasions by the West and the actual means to apply this attitude of firmness in practice. He complained about the absence of emergency legislation in Germany, and indicated that he was continually pressing the Chancellor to take measures necessary to enact the required legislation. He strongly criticized the German Socialist position which he accused of paying lip service to NATO and Western defense while being absolutely opposed to the measures which should be taken to enable Germany to meet the situation she faced.

With regard to that part of the conversation which had to do with NATO strategy, Minister Strauss repeated the Germans' views which have already been conveyed to us officially.

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